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STATE FOR EAP/ANP-DRICCI, EB/ODF-RDEMARCELLUS, EB/IRAQ AND NEA/I

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: NEW ZEALAND ISSUES STATEMENT SUPPORTING FORMATION OF NEW
IRAQI GOVERNMENT

REF: STATE 81632

¶1. New Zealand Foreign Minister Winston Peters issued a statement May 22 hailing the formation of the new Iraqi government. "I congratulate Prime Minister Nouri Maliki and his colleagues on persevering over many months with forming a representative list of Cabinet members," Peters said in his statement. The full statement is reproduced in Paragraph 3. Post delivered reftel demarche on May 22 to the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT).

¶2. New Zealand has disbursed more than NZ \$1.5 million (US \$936,000) in assistance to Iraq through the UN development fund for Iraq for the fiscal year 2005-6. It has pledged NZ \$2 million (US \$1.25 million) in reconstruction assistance for the fiscal year. The government hopes to decide within the next two months how much assistance it will allocate for Iraqi reconstruction for the next fiscal year, according to Ngawini Keelan of MFAT's Middle East and Africa Division.

¶3. Begin statement by Foreign Minister Peters:

The formation of a new government in Iraq after months of negotiations is a crucial step in the democratic process, Foreign Minister Winston Peters said today.

"I congratulate Prime Minister Nouri Maliki and his colleagues on persevering over many months with forming a representative list of Cabinet members," Mr Peters said.

The process of identifying ministers for the new Iraqi Government has taken five months, and followed the election of an Iraqi parliament - the Council of Representatives - as provided for by the new Iraqi constitution.

The new Cabinet was approved by the Council of Representatives over the weekend.

"This opens up for Iraq the possibility of a positive future and I welcome the formation of the new government. Now its job will be to try to make that future become a reality."

Iraq continues to face severe challenges in terms of internal security and in securing an economic foundation for the future. Problems remain in ensuring even the basis necessities of life are provided for many.

"Iraq's security challenges are partly reflected in the fact that appointees to the security, interior and defence portfolios have yet to be found.

"It is vital to find the right people for these jobs and I wish Mr Maliki well in his ongoing talks," said Mr Peters.

End statement.

MCCORMICK